

PASTORAL LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

The Clergy and Laity

OF THE

DIOCESE OF ST. JOHN

BY THE

Right Reverend T. CASEY, D.D.

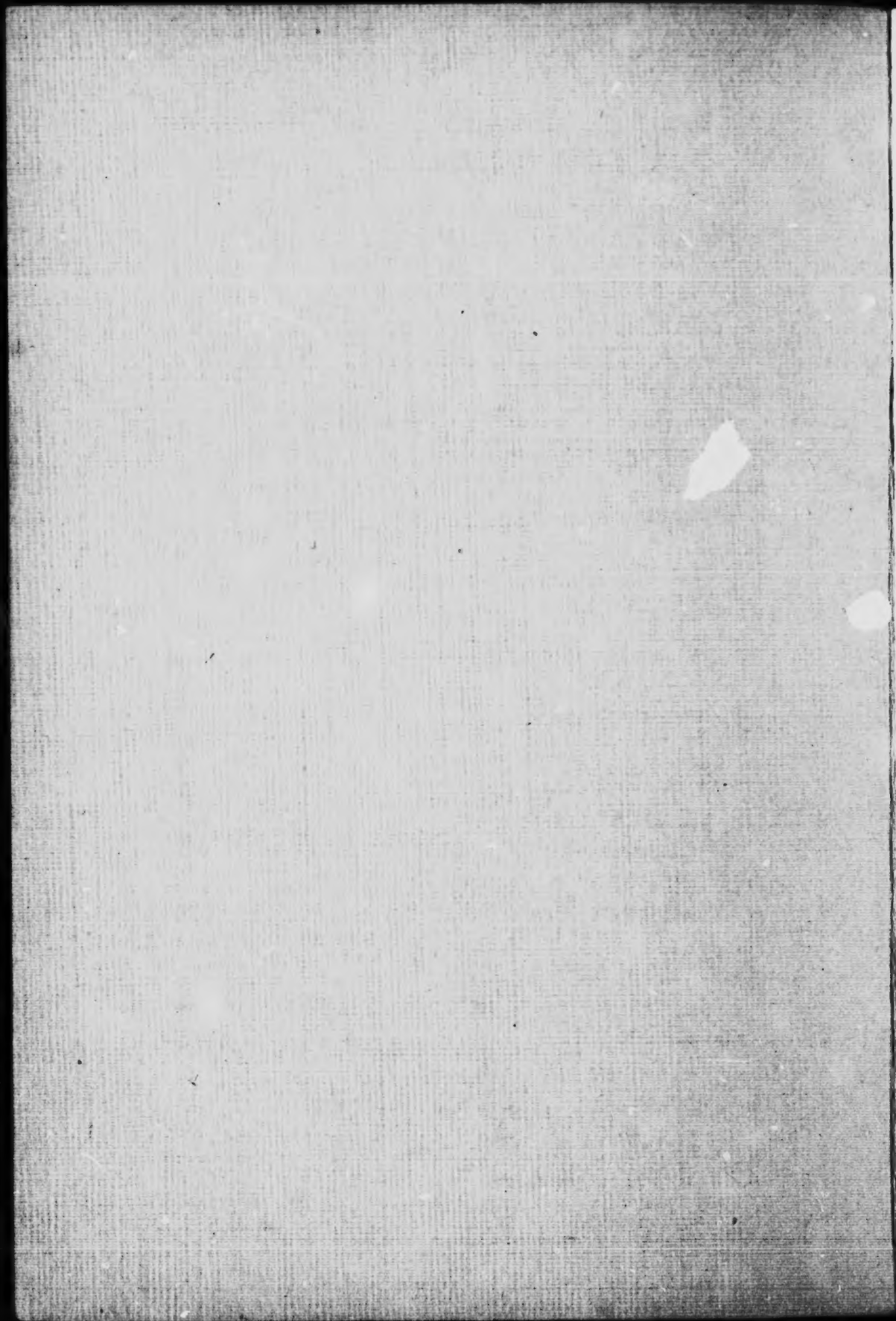
Bishop of St. John



ST. JOHN, N. B.

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Timothy

By the Grace of God and Favour of
The Apostolic See

Bishop of Saint John,

To the Clergy, Religious Orders and Laity
of the Diocese :

Health and Benediction in the Lord.

DEARLY BELOVED:

Nothing can be more conducive to God's glory than the homage we may render to the Holy Name of Jesus : more especially now, when so many deny in word and work the Divinity of Christ. The second commandment of the Decalogue forbids any irreverence to the Holy Name; and, really the wonder is that such a commandment should be necessary, when we see that Christ Himself declares the declaration of His law by declaiming the sacred Name of His Personality and by forbidding any rival gods: "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods before Me." How can we sincerely say that we adore God with faith, hope and charity, if we fail in that sovereign reverence that is due to His Holy Name? But, so important is the fulfilment of our duty in this regard, that He issues a new decree expressly for this end; and so we find the second commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Henceforth there can be no profanation of the Holy Name possible, without a violation of the Commandments of God.

Nor are we to presume that God hereby added anything superfluous to His law; for His actions cannot be measured by

our feeble reason. The greatness and the dignity of the Holy Name, before which "every knee shall bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth," are such that, with fallen man's tendency to forget his obligations, it was necessary, in order to secure its due reverence, to prescribe this duty by a separate and definite commandment. If we may be reverently permitted to peer into the designs of God, this, we judge, was His object in proclaiming, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

And the more we examine God's dealing with men, the more evident it will become how great is the significance which He attaches to His Name. Speaking to Moses on the great affair of delivering His chosen people from Egyptian bondage and establishing them in the land flowing with milk and honey, He declares that, though He had spoken to the earlier fathers,—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, on important matters, yet He did not make His Name known to them, holding this great power in reserve for the deliverance of His people from Egypt: "I am the Lord that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, by the Name of God Almighty; and my name Adonai (or Jehovah) I did not show them."—*Exod. VI. 3.* In this great deliverance, now about to be effected, Moses saw the necessity of publishing to the Hebrew people the name of their deliverer; and, therefore, he asked God by what name he would declare Him to the Jews, so that he might prove that he had received this commission. Then, "God said to Moses, I am who am . . . This is my name forever, and this is my memorial to all generations."—*Exod. III. 14.*

Assuming a new Name on the occasion of saving His people from their enemies, God at once demonstrated its tremendous power. Not by it were the sweet and saving works of grace, that we know of, accomplished, but those fearful calamities, that are called in history "The Plagues of Egypt," were inflicted on a stubborn race. It was that the chosen people might be delivered from barbarous cruelties, that the tremendous power of the delivering Name was manifested, and the "Plagues" were launched on the reprobate Egyptians.

And once revealed, the power and excellence of the Name of God were evermore to be magnified. It is not the letters which compose it, the mere form of the word, that we are to honour; it is that which is expressed by the word, namely, the eternal Power and Majesty of one God and three Divine Persons. We adore, too, the Name of Jesus as the Name of God, in spite of the blasphemies that have been uttered against it by the ungodly, and because too of the insults offered to God in the Holy Mass by anti-Christian and blasphemous malefactors in press and on platform. From the time of its revelation right on through Sacred Scriptures, it is abundantly evident that the Name of God becomes the symbol of Himself.

The Divine Mercy deigned hereby most graciously to consult the needs of fallen humanity, and to devise the means most efficaciously to succour them. Both history and experience bear testimony to the need and power of a symbol. Nations have their flags, societies their devices, colleges their colours. While symbols thus seem necessary, their power is known to all. The American eagle, the rose, the shamrock and the thistle, and a host of such symbols, show the power these tokens have over men's minds. Rich with sacred memories, they touch the heart and arouse enthusiasm: around them men fight and shed their blood.

Hence God's goodness and love appear manifest in bequeathing to us His Name as the symbol of Himself.

We therefore find it called holy and terrible, glorious and gracious. It receives the homage that is due to God, as in numberless places we are invited to praise it, to bless it, to exalt it; "Not to us, oh Lord, but to Thy Name be the glory" forever. We are assured that our unfailing help is in the Name of the Lord; we are counselled to trust in it, and promised salvation on its invocation. Thus nothing can be conceived more sublime or more salutary than reverence for the Holy Name. It stands for us in the place of God; for we know His nature is invisible, and that, by reason of our weakness, it can be manifested to us only by imperfect symbols. He, therefore, appeared to Moses in the burning bush of Horeb, to John in the dove on the head of the Saviour; and to us the Holy Name is, in like manner,

a symbol of His Divine Majesty. But the "Name" by which God is designated is not to be restricted to any particular form: it extends to every name by which He may be known; as "the Lord," "the Almighty," "the Mighty," and others of like tenor, which are found in Scripture; all of which are entitled to the same veneration.

In our plea for due reverence to the Holy Name, there is a positive and a negative aspect, each of sovereign import. We are obliged to render it due honour; we are forbidden to take it in vain. There are various ways of honouring the name of God, such as openly confessing Him to be our Lord, proclaiming Christ to be the author of our salvation, paying religious attention to the Divine Word as made known to us by Holy Scriptures, legitimately interpreted by the Catholic Church. There is, however, one sovereign means of practically honouring it always, than which nothing can be more efficacious for our sanctification and for securing our salvation. It is praising it at all times, and confidently invoking its protection, especially by ejaculatory prayer. All the masters of spiritual life, taking the Scriptures as their guide and following the practice of the Church throughout the ages, agree that these means of honouring the Holy Name are of their nature so excellent, that our lives, day and night, could not be spent in a more holy and salutary manner than in such exercises of piety: "I will bless the Lord," says David, "at all times, His praise shall always be in my mouth."—*Ps. XXXIII. 2.* "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He hath done for thee"—*Ps. CII. 1.* And He considers it honouring His Name when we invoke His assistance with confidence, either for relief in our afflictions or for the necessary strength to bear them: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."—*Ps. XLIX. 15.* Many and beautiful examples of such supplications may be found in the sixteenth, forty-third, and one hundred and eighteenth Psalms, as well as in many other parts of Holy Scripture. Besides such divine warrants for this wholesome practice, by it we fulfil in the most perfect manner the oft-repeated injunctions of our Lord and the sacred writers of the New Testament: "We must always pray and never faint."

In this salutary exercise we cannot fail to recognize the greatness of our privilege over the early children of the Old Testament; for God did not even deign to make His name known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He manifested it to us in all its power, and beauty, and sweetness. He bequeathed it to us, as the symbol of Himself, made it supply all our wants: "Everyone that calleth upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved."—*Rom. X. 13*. More privileged then than the children of the olden dispensation, not only can we invoke the Name of the Lord, but we ought to do so, thus to render Him our homage and to obtain His grace. We should, however, pronounce it with the same sentiments as the angels and saints who, prostrate before the throne of the Most High, cry without ceasing with fear and trembling: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord, God of Hosts."—*Isaiah VI. 3*. David, too, may well be our model, using all the beautiful forms of language in a thousand places in the Psalms: "Magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol His Name together."—*Ps. XXXIII. 4*. "I will sing to the Name of the Lord the Most High."—*Ps. VII. 18*. Confidence and love must ever animate us in such invocations, and a lively faith should always be their foundation, especially in our trials and afflictions; for here is our principal source of relief: "Our help is in the Name of the Lord."—*Ps. CXXIII. 8*.

As nothing can be more beautiful, profitable and glorious than thus praising and calling upon the Name of the Lord, nothing can be more injurious to ourselves as well as to God than associating it with falsehood, vengeance or cursing.

In our efforts to understand the gravity of the negative or prohibitive aspect of the second commandment, it will be necessary always to keep in mind the sovereign grandeur of the Holy Name. Although there are various ways by which we can thus offend, there are two to which there is a great tendency in the present age, and that in many parts of the American world, perjury and cursing, each of which seems little removed from blasphemy. This is the greatest of all sins; and, therefore, the one against which at all costs it behooves us to be on our guard.

The sanctity of oaths must be respected, or civil society will be flooded by all sorts of crime, including homicide and all the

excesses of barbarism. Perjury, as every one knows, is the violation of a lawful oath or the taking of a false one. That oaths may be lawful and necessary is abundantly proved by numberless instances in Holy Writ, as well as by the constant tradition of Christian civilization: "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God," says Moses, "and shalt serve Him only, and thou shalt swear by His Name."—*Deut. VI. 13.* The Apostles, too, whose bright example we may follow in all things, sometimes made use of oaths as is evident in the Epistles of Saint Paul: *2 Cor. I. 23, 1 Thess. II. 10.* David tells us that God Himself deigned to swear when the proper conditions were not wanting: "The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec."—*Ps. LXII. 12.*

X The conditions necessary to render an oath lawful, are briefly indicated by the Prophet Jeremiah: "Thou shalt swear as the Lord liveth, in truth, and in judgment, and in justice."—*Jerem. IV. 2.* Here we have in brief the words which summarize all the conditions which constitute the perfection of an oath—truth, judgment, justice.

The first condition, truth, is undoubtedly the most important, though the absence of either of the other two may render the oath very sinful. To understand the necessity of having truth with us in swearing, it is well to recall the end and the intent of an oath, namely, to establish the justice and innocence of man, and to terminate disputes and contests: Saint Paul tells us this in writing to the Hebrews.—*Heb. VI. 16.* It was not always thus, for a time was when man's word was sufficient without calling upon the Name of the Creator. The necessity of oaths is therefore not without its humiliation to us, while their frequency cannot but be highly prejudicial. Says Saint Chrysostome: "Oaths were introduced among men, not at the beginning of the world but long after; when vice had overspread the earth; when the moral world was convulsed to its centre, and universal confusion reigned; when to complete the picture of human depravity, man debased the dignity of his nature by prostrating himself in degrading servitude to idols: then it was that God was appealed to as a witness of the truth, when considering to what a height perfidy and wickedness had risen, it was with difficulty that

man could be induced to credit the assertion of his fellow-man." According to that holy doctor, it appeared that the height of human depravity was reached when men had to appeal to God as a witness to the truth. What would he think or say were he to learn the wickedness of our times, when we hear the lawyers, and even the judges of our courts, declaring that they do not believe the sworn testimony of the witnesses? Can human malice be greater than such sovereign contempt of the Most High? This is, as it were, official perjury; but scarcely less wicked is the indiscriminate swearing without truth, or judgment, or justice, that is to be heard all around us in every day life. Even children learn to swear, and learn many other vices from the streets and the scandalous freedom allowed them when they should be at home or at school.

Still more common, and almost as wicked, is the execrable habit of cursing. To bless one is to wish him well, to call heaven's favours down upon him; to curse him, on the contrary, is to consign him to the evil Spirit; it is therefore to undo the work of baptism and redemption. The different forms of cursing are unfortunately so common that there is no need to recall them here; it will be sufficient to note that the curse may be directed against ourselves, our neighbours, or even the irrational creatures. What concerns us most just now, is to form a proper idea of the gravity of the sin committed by cursing. It may unite in itself, in a single instance, the awful crimes of blasphemy and sacrilege. First of all, it opposes the spirit of Jesus Christ. That divine Saviour breathed only sweetness and charity; it therefore opposes Him to wish evil to our brethren: "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not."—1 *Peter II.* 23. Besides, yielding to this unholy practice, we allow ourselves to be ruled by the spirit of Satan, that great enemy of God and man, who, according to Saint Chrysostome, makes use of cursing as the most proper instrument of leading us into sin. Having the devil often on our tongue is a proof that he has possession of our heart. In fine, cursing is the office of the lost souls in hell. In despair, those unfortunates never cease launching their curses against God, against themselves, and all creatures. To curse as they do is to

associate oneself with their blasphemies, is to form with them one infernal chorus.

While it should now be sufficiently clear how enormous is the sin of cursing, and how earnestly we should therefore labour to correct it in ourselves, and to frown upon it in others, the importance of the matter demands that we should inquire a little into blasphemy, with which cursing and perjury are so closely connected. No less illustrious an authority than the great Chrysostome declares: "There is nothing worse than blasphemy." And that not less recognized doctor, St. Jerome, tells us: "There is nothing more horrible than blasphemy; every other sin compared to it is trifling." It would be easy to show the reasons why those two great doctors expressed themselves so emphatically on the enormity of this crime; as, that the blasphemer prostitutes the gift of speech to attack the Majesty of God and to dishonour His Name, attacks God Himself, merely for a whim or an empty vaunt; but the lustre of their authority is sufficient to show us the inherent malice of blasphemy.

And the consequences of such a sin are not confined to the criminals, but tend to the overthrow of society. The basis of all human conventions is that man must give due credit to a fellow-man. Self-interest, however, may induce one to deceive his fellows; and God permitted the use of the oath to remedy this evil, and to lay a foundation for social conventions by exacting a sovereign guarantee for the declarations of man. Take away the oath, or legislate that its violation be innocent, and human society is dissolved; the life and property of an accused before the courts are at the mercy of false witnesses or of interested tribunals. Thence would follow the ruin of all speculations, of all commercial associations, of all exploiting companies, and a thousand other business measures necessary for civilization, besides universal disorders; as any material building would fall when its foundation was destroyed. So true it is that respect for an oath is the very foundation of society, that the Roman code declared the perjurer infamous, and the laws of all nations, including Canada, make him liable to the severest punishment. In so great horror was the crime of blasphemy held in the time of King Louis IX. of France, that that saintly monarch ordered

that the tongue of the blasphemer should be pierced with a red-hot iron.

Recall, too, the severity of the ancient law, when Moses, the great Hebrew legislator, decreed this sentence against such as outraged in speech the Most High: "Take the blasphemer without the camp, and let those who heard him lay hands upon his head. Dying, he shall die, and the multitude shall stone him." Should not even the mere recital of such a sentence suffice to show cursers and blasphemers and evil speakers in our own times, how detestable this worse than barbarian, this fiendish, habit of wicked speech is, when great servants of God, men naturally of mildest temperament, would thus proceed against it? But concerning much of anti-Christian speech and concerning the wild utterances of free thinkers against the very basic principles of Christianity, what shall we say? How can we speak of those socialistic blasphemies which are spread abroad by certain ungodly papers, and which aim at doing Satan's work by striking at the very root of Christianity, even at the God-head of Christ? Shall not we, as Catholics deriving our religion from Christ, the "Eternal Son of the Eternal Father," shall not we once more raise our voice with Saint Athanasius, and say as against all anti-Christian blasphemers, ancient and modern: "This is the Catholic faith, that we venerate one God in a Trinity and a Trinity in Unity, not confusing the Persons or dividing the Nature. For the Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are distinct each from the other. But the Divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the same — their glory is equal and their majesty is co-eternal. As is the Father such is the Son, and such the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are no one of them created."

And now, with the power and splendour of the Holy Name made familiar to us, may we not to our great advantage apply it as the remedy for the evils of the day? What the inspired Apostle, St. Peter, told us is always true, "There is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved;" and this salvation may refer to society as well as to the individual. The great social evils that are agitating the world today, centre right around the question of capital and labour. There was no

such capitalist ever seen in the world or can ever again appear as Christ the Lord, for there is nothing in all the world that is not His: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein."—*Ps. XXIII.* 1. Notwithstanding His incalculable riches, He chose the labourer's lot to sanctify the workmen and to elevate honest toil, to confound the capitalist who would grind the poor and the socialist who would overthrow Christianity. Let our sympathy and our affection for the poor and the working class be ever sincere and tender, for it is their portion our Blessed Lord chose. Such honest industries as will advance prosperity are commendable; and with Leo XIII. and Pius X. we cry out for a living wage for all engaged in labour. This is in keeping with justice and charity, and honest interest in workingmen: it is the duty of all peoples.

Mindful of what it cost Him who bore the Name of Jesus, obedience unto the death of the Cross, we would counsel all against a dangerous tendency of our times,—the inordinate love of pleasure. Legitimate recreation is not forbidden to children, youth, even to those advanced in years; but we should not forget that it is not the end of our being. Wicked practices may be easily adopted under the pretence of amusement. The recreation of children may be wisely and prudently regulated by their parents. Young men should be particularly on their guard against the soul-killing and body-destroying evils of intemperance in drink. The taste for alcoholic liquors is a cultivated one; and, before it is acquired, there is no inclination or temptation to drunkenness. Besides, daily experience unhappily proves that excess in drink is the fruitful cause of much of the cursing, perjury and blasphemy, that are so severely condemned in the Holy Scriptures and by the Fathers of the Church. We would, therefore, earnestly counsel our youth to avoid cultivating the taste for such drink; and thus their safety from intemperance is secured. Excess in novel reading and in frequenting theatricals is something to be particularly guarded against by young women, and may be easily avoided by cultivating the profitable taste for good literature.

It would not be well to leave this subject of amusements without saying a word about dancing. There are perhaps no very flagrant abuses around us on this delicate subject; but it is so full of dangers, so opposed to piety and to those things that are of God, that we should be even more on our guard concerning it than concerning the use of liquor. We therefore deem it reprehensible in Societies bearing the Catholic name to hold "Assemblies" at which this dangerous practice is countenanced. The presence of the aged and venerable may be instrumental in the hands of the Evil One in spreading a veil of innocence over those things that are destructive of the souls of the young. This is particularly true concerning what are popularly known as "round dances." Hence the Fathers of the second Plenary Council of Baltimore declared: "We consider it to be our duty to warn our people against . . . those fashionable dances, which, as at present carried on, are revolting to every feeling of delicacy and propriety, and are fraught with the greatest danger to morals." This by way of spending the time to spare from legitimate occupation. To all we would counsel moderation in amusement; for it is not the end of our being, but a means of cultivating our character.

As the end of our being is to secure our eternal salvation, nothing can be of greater moment to us, and likewise to the well-being of society and the State, than the practice of this salutary devotion to the Holy Name: for "Every one that calleth on the name of the Lord, shall be saved." In the Holy Name we address to you the words of eternal life, in it do you also attend to the divine message. Be it ever called down upon us all! be it our strength and our protection during our pilgrimage here on earth; be it our comfort and help in death; be it our joy and glory in eternity.

The regulations for Lent will be the same as last year.

Prayer and self-denial should be generously practiced during the Holy Season, especially invocation of the Holy Name, and abstinence from unnecessary amusements and intoxicating liquor.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus be with you all, Brethren.

This Pastoral shall be read in every Church of the Diocese on the first Sunday after its reception that the Pastor officiates therein.



† T. CASEY,
Bishop of Saint John.

A. W. MEAHAN,
Secretary.

Given at Saint John, Commemoration of the Passion of Our Lord,
February 16, 1909.

